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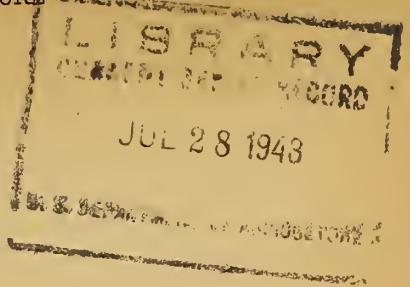
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Picture Story No. 53  
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NATIONAL POULTRY IMPROVEMENT PLAN  
GAINS IN FARM FAVOR



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Poultry breeders and hatcherymen, in larger numbers than ever before, are taking part in the National Poultry Improvement Plan, according to the Bureau of Animal Industry, U. S. Department of Agriculture, which, in cooperation with State agencies, administers it. This voluntary program was set up in 1935 to encourage the breeding and wider use of more productive and otherwise superior chickens. It is directed largely at the improvement of the flocks that furnish eggs to hatcheries, now the source of supply for 9 out of 10 chicks raised on farms. About 4,500 hatcheries, with a capacity of 326,000,000 eggs, participated in the plan in 1947.

The National Poultry Improvement Plan provides for official supervision of flocks whose owners agree to cooperate and who meet the necessary requirements. There are four breeding stages under the plan, each based on successively higher quality requirements. Compliance with the requirements for the various stages entitles chickens to the official designation "U. S. Approved," "U. S. Certified," "U. S. Record of Performance" ("U.S.R.O.P."), or "U. S. Register of Merit" ("U.S.R.O.M.").

To qualify for the "U. S. Approved" stage, both hens and roosters must be physically sound and acceptable representatives of their respective breeds. "U. S. Certified" carries the added requirement that the sires in the flock be U.S.R.O.P. birds. Flocks totaling about 24,000,000 chickens are participating in the U. S. Approved and U. S. Certified breeding stages this year.

To qualify for U.S.R.O.P., hens must have laid 200 or more eggs averaging at least 2 ounces each. The "chickens of merit" meet the highest specifications under the program. To attain U.S.R.O.M. status both sires and dams must have proved their ability to produce a high proportion of R.O.P. daughters. Participation in the two highest stages of the plan call for a very extensive program of trap-nesting, pedigree breeding, and record keeping on the part of breeders and for detailed analyses of the records by State and Federal poultry improvement workers. Last year, breeders of more than 220,000 birds in trap-nested flocks participated in the two highest stages of the plan.

Production records on individual farms throughout the country are sent first to State supervisors for summarizing and then on to the National Poultry Improvement Plan office at Beltsville, Md. Here they are analyzed on a genetic basis. The complete report on a family of birds includes special notations for the daughters that have qualified for U.S.R.O.P., as well as for the superior male and female birds whose progeny record entitles them to the U.S.R.O.M. designation. From the data in these records, the geneticist formulates suggestions as to how breeders may improve their methods. Finally the records are returned to the individual breeders for study and use in future breeding operations.

The accompanying pictures show some of the steps in poultry breeding under the National Poultry Improvement Plan.

(OVER)

Picture Story No. 53 - National Poultry Improvement Plan

(EDITORS AND WRITERS: You may obtain 8x10 glossy prints of any of the pictures here shown free on request to Press Service, Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D.C.)

(1) All chickens coming under the National Poultry Improvement Plan must be tested for pullorum disease

(2) Hens that are candidates for U. S. Record of Performance must meet certain specifications as to weight

(3) And as to the number and weights of eggs laid

(4) Eggs from hens that have qualified for R.O.P. and are trying for Register of Merit are sorted out for the incubator

(5) Each egg produced by a candidate for R.O.M. is marked to show the hen that laid it (number on hen's leg band) and the sire.

(6) After 18 days in the incubator, eggs produced by R. O. M. candidates are transferred to a small hatching basket and returned to the incubator

(7) At the end of the incubation period the basket is taken out and the chicks hatching from the eggs are fitted with wing bands carrying their identification numbers.

Records from breeders participating in the National Poultry Improvement Plan are analyzed in the plan offices at the Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, Md.

(8) Data from the record sheets sent in from the field are transferred to punch cards.

(9) The punch cards are filed by breeders

(10) A special tabulating machine makes it possible to obtain a summary of the record of a poultry family from the punch cards.

(11) Improved breeding methods for participants in the plan are worked out from the data in the summary reports.

(12) This White Leghorn rooster and his mates qualified as Chickens of Merit.